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GERMANY AND THE JUDGMENT

I.

“Professor Schönerer writes: ‘We are not only men; we are more than men, because we are Germans.’ Nobody smiled in Germany, when in 1905 the Kaiser said at Bremen in a public oration: ‘We are the salt of the earth. God has called upon us to civilize the world. We are the missionaries of Progress.’” * This is a tempting text for one who would like to show that the German soul is diseased rather than immoral. Let us use it, rather, to show that the Germans expect to be judged by the highest ethical and spiritual standards. Let us assume the correctness of Germany’s good opinion of herself, and examine her conduct in the present world-crisis by means of material as little disputable as the nature of the case allows. We shall then be in a position to have the conscience of mankind decide whether there is really a case against Germany, and can proceed to try her by a jury of her own noblest spirits. Though many of us deplore the average pro-German’s inability to see any fault in Germany, even some anti-Germans admit that it is the Germans, so far as official papers and pronouncements and official news are concerned, who, apart from diplomatic secrets, have given us the frankest and most straightforward news items, except perhaps with regard to India and Egypt. Hence with some degree of confidence we may, in the light of their own admissions, examine their case *in re* the ethics of the war. It may turn out later that the conduct of the Allies with regard to Belgium and Greece will appear to be little if any more ethical than that of the Teutonic powers toward Belgium and Servia.

Thus far, however, the moral balance is heavily against the Germans. It would be absurd, indeed, to decide on that account that the German people and government are less moral than others of the great powers. Doubtless German virtues excel in other directions that are not being discussed just now. And it may well be that the Germans are simply practising con-

* Count Goblet D’Alviella, in *Hibbert Journal* for January, 1916.

sistently and with "improvements," the selfish principles that have determined the policies of the nations for many generations. When no nation is really Christian in its policy and conduct, it ill becomes us to throw all the blame on the Germans. Then, too, the circumstances of German history, fitting in with the peculiarities of German temperament and civilization, render them more open to criticism. Germany has come to her own late in the day. For generations she has had a genuine dread of being set upon by other powers. Perhaps this anxiety was the bottom fact in the formation of the Triple Alliance. Perhaps her nervousness reached greater intensity at the bringing about of the Triple Entente. Phillips Brooks, than whom one can find no fairer witness, noticed Germany's dread of attack from her neighbors as far back as the late seventies and early eighties. We have no right to doubt Germany's sincerity in this matter, nor that she had abundant reasons for perturbation after the formation of the Triple Entente. True, some of her conduct may be interpreted as aggressive; but the bulk of the evidence seems to indicate that she regarded a clash as inevitable and perhaps under the circumstances advisable. No doubt such an attitude predisposed her to "go off half-cocked." But surely it has been a commonplace of European politics that a war was likely to come sooner or later. It seems to me that the armaments were the result of mutual fear and suspicion among the nations rather than *vice versa*,—and I am quite unconvinced by the pro-British use of such books as Bernhardi's. The last-named expressed the political attitude of some influential men in Great Britain and France, and of many, perhaps, in Germany; and yet I question if it can be proved that the average German shared his view. Unquestionably German motives should be given the benefit of all reasonable doubt and the judgment of charity. Judge not lest ye be judged, is as true of nations as of individuals.

Nevertheless, it is our solemn duty to examine the ethical admissions of the government that claims to rule the most cultured and Christian people on earth. If Germany has been the victim of a sort of national hysteria, we may sorrow over her condition, but continue to hold her responsible for her acts.

She is as capable of resisting "hysteria" as any other nation is; and she has been lavish with her criticism of "decadent" and "hysterical" France.

There is one kind of partisanship which we must avow in common with great German philosophers, and that is the bias in favor of the Inviolable Moral Law. However *natural* we may find German conduct to be in the light of German history and temperament and institutions; however few the stripes the Eternal Judge may administer at the End; however much we may hereafter deprecate the attempt to punish Germany except in requiring reparation such as neutrals deem fair; however strongly some of us would wish to see the negotiations for stable peace started from the position occupied by all the belligerents before the Austrian invasion of Serbia;—in fine, whatever allowances we may make for Germans and their consciences, we must strive to measure their admitted conduct by the standard of their own higher viewpoints when they have been humanitarian teachers of the world. Unless Germany can be brought to see her flagrant violation of international morality with regard especially to the three great principles of Equity, Wisdom, and Benevolence, the war will have largely been in vain. After praising Germany extravagantly for a generation it would be absurd for the world to pretend to depreciate her now, and fail to see that moral nearsightedness in Germany may become in large measure a dulling of the vision of international conscience.

II.

Remembering that we are bringing the indictment against Germany because the evidence obtainable indicates greater culpability combined with a claim, in large measure substantiated, to a high degree of culture, and admitting that all the nations are to be regarded as blameworthy, we may set forth the charges quite briefly.

1. *Offences Against Wisdom or Ethical Prudence.*—Germany's major offence on this account is admitted in her plain statement that she had given her ally a free hand against Serbia, though she realized that it might bring on a European war. She was willing to run such risks in order that the Servians should be

punished for an alleged crime on the part of the Servian government against the reigning house of Austria-Hungary. Now it is the height of unwisdom to give any individuals or any nation a free hand, especially when such an attitude makes arbitration almost impossible. Then, too, on the face of the evidence, it looks as if Germany brought her issue with Russia to a sharp determination even when Austria-Hungary showed a disposition toward international discussion of the questions at issue.

The Teutonic Allies were also unwise in attempting to terrorize their enemies. Caring so little for the humanitarian sentiments of neutral nations, they inconsistently appeal to sentiment, against their own previous usage, in their effort to have the United States forbid the exportations of arms and munitions to the Allies.

Once more, Germany and Austria have been foolish in not discouraging, but rather to all appearances encouraging, a disloyal and even destructive attitude on the part of certain German-Americans. Elevating patriotism to the highest, Germany nevertheless seems to tell citizens of the United States that German blood is to count for more than American citizenship. In demanding the recall of Austrian and German diplomatic representatives, our country recognizes this unwisdom, whatever its motive.

2. *Offences Against Benevolence or Humanitarian Sentiment.*—These are multiplied by the Teutonic policy of "Frightfulness." Even if a knowledge of civilized human nature promised success for such a policy—and there has never been such promise—German "efficiency" has shown a callous, if not a cynical and cruel, disregard for the amenities of decent warfare. Even if we divide by four the accusations of the Bryce Commission, nothing can rub out the thrice damned spots made by such episodes as the Lusitania and Cavell cases, and German failure to protect the Armenians. Germany has been compelled to take some cognizance of the horror of the civilized world, but she has shown no disposition to disavow actually such atrocities or to punish the offenders. However numerous the Russian atroc-

ities,—they seem to have been confined largely to a brief period during the invasion of East Prussia,—“Barbarous Russia” has shown no effort in the direction of self-conscious *official* frightfulness. Neutral nations condemn unworthy acts, whether Russian or German. Unless we admit the direst of all ethical heresies, that the end justifies the means, even supposing that the success of Germany in crushing her enemies is the manifest desire of Providence, we cannot condone the *objective* malevolence of this policy, though kaiser and emperor were to shed gallons of tears because of the alleged necessary evil that had to be wrought. The unbiased opinion of all men everywhere at all times is against contravention of the acknowledged *mores* of the nations. If a course of conduct is to be esteemed right because Germans pursue it as “necessary,” and if the God of the kaiser is to be the God of the whole earth, sooner or later all the neutral civilized nations will be drawn into the war against Germany and Austria. If “duty” is merely a national affair and Germany is *the* nation, then indeed Kant’s categorical imperative has been perverted to ends that the fine old philosopher never dreamed of. In such case the fault is to be found, not with the absoluteness of the imperative, but with the iniquitous wresting of it to the destruction of international humane standards.

3. *Offences Against Equity*.—Here we reach perhaps the head and front of Germany’s offending—the offence against international law and the golden rule underlying it. The German Chancellor has admitted the charge in the case of the violation of Belgium’s sovereignty and the breaking of solemn international agreement. And Germany went further still. With what to some of us appears to be a blind cynicism, she asked Great Britain to forget that nation’s obligations and to compound with Germany in committing an international felony. The Chancellor puts the rather mythical claim of blood relationship ahead of sacred obligations—a claim which in the light of recent events was sinister and insincere, or else preposterously foolish. Whether or not England went to war on Belgium’s account is a matter with which we have little concern. We have

no more right to decide with regard to England's motives than in the case of Germany's, and we are quite prepared to say that Germany has persuaded herself that her "motives" were right and proper. The damning fact remains that Germany knew she was doing wrong, wanted England to connive at her wrongdoing, and had the effrontery to suggest that after the war she would and could justify the outrageous failure to respect her treaty obligations. Past crimes and misdemeanors on the part of other nations do not change the issue, least of all in the case of the land of Luther and culture. Efforts to show that France first broke the convention are as disingenuous as they are vain, in the light of the Chancellor's frank admission. Records found at Brussels and interpreted in pro-German fashion cannot clear Germany of guilt, even if they proved anything except that Great Britain and Belgium were justified in mistrusting Germany. The case of Greece, as known thus far, is so different that one feels only pity or contempt for the intellect that cannot or will not see the difference, especially in the light of Greece's recent assurances of sympathy with the Allies and her repudiation of the spirit of her treaty obligations with Servia. Nor is the case changed in any respect if it shall be shown that Italy was actuated by sordid motives in entering the war. Germany started the process of self-sophistication and moral unreason, and it would not be surprising if some of the Allies thought it necessary to fight the devil with fire, however wrong such actions may be.

It may be said as to all three counts of the indictment that Germany was justified in acting in self-defence. Now the German government *might* conceivably have said to the German people: "I could not love thee, dear, so well, loved I not honor more." Let us suppose, however, that the German leaders esteem such a sentiment as "inefficient" and sentimental. Is the whole principle of international law to be thrown overboard to suit the conveniences of one nation? Will anyone dare to assert that only by going through Belgium could Germany save herself from destruction? Is the capture of Paris so important to efficient Germany *that she could take no risks at all for the*

sake of human rights and international law and morality? Would she wish her action to become "law universal"? If another nation had made the demand on her that she made on Belgium, would she have acted otherwise than Belgium did? Is the present government of Germany so sacred and important to the world, or even to the German people, as to justify the overthrow of legal and moral standards? These and other like questions Germany may attempt to answer, but she can hope to be listened to only at the mouth of her successful great guns. Germany's most conspicuous fault is her *profound lack of sportsmanship*. German officialdom has not behaved like a gentleman and a Christian. Is it incapable of feeling the *meanness* of much that it has done, from grinding under its feet a gallant nation,—some of whose citizens naturally enough fought venomously, contrary to their government's command,—to the shooting of the poor trained nurse who was trying to save men from what she regarded as the dangers of German frightfulness? Germany may ridicule England's propensity for sport, but Great Britain can teach her the larger sportsmanship for a long time, in spite of England's doubtful initial treatment of the Boers. It is cowardly to protect oneself at the expense of the innocent; how much the more distardly is it for a professional fighter, fully prepared, to pursue aggressive action over the body of a small and unoffending neutral.

Even if Germany is carrying out logically and effectively the actual moral tendencies of the nations, we can still say, "We expected better of you, O Germany, whose spiritual leaders were faithful so long to the best moral traditions of humanitarian culture." But, no; in Germany's opinion her aggressive safety is more important than international law and the code of international ethics. Efficiency first, morality afterward, seems to be her national slogan. She has had her hour of grace; she is going through her hour of blindness; God grant that she may repent before she has to go through her hour of doom. Suppose she wins her unrighteous fight? Then, no doubt, she will be ready to punish unsympathetic neutrals that do not put her supposititious "safety" above the interests of the law and humanity. As the Frankfort paper says, she will try to teach the

United States how to discriminate between Englishmen and Germans.

III.

In the eyes of the disinterested neutral nations Germany is blind to the moral principles involved in this war. Indeed, I think that she can be judged by her own great ones of the past. Let us now set forth as concisely as possible the stages of spiritual culture as illustrated by leading German thinkers, and see, if we can, whether Germany cares for such things in her official conduct.

I. *Vocational*.—None better than some of the great souls of Germany have taught the basal truth of the dignity of the City of Man-Soul, and the eternal worth of each of its members. Lessing and Goethe, for instance, true patriots as they were, forgot not the patriotism of humanity and the sacredness of human personality in all men everywhere and at all times. On Lessing's broad stage all philosophies and religions play their worthwhile parts. The elect of earth are moral aristocrats by the grace of God, and their responsibility for service is commensurate with their power. Goethe taught the treasonableness of yielding to wild passion and the tragedy of hurting a human soul. To neither was a "place in the sun" for Germany the greatest of ethical aims. Let those who *can* imagine these giants jingoes of present-day Germany. Beneath all their thought and feeling and volition lay a firm and broad-based cosmopolitan humanitarianism. To them the real unit of the cosmos is the social individuality of separate human souls wherever they may be found. *They* would not have been mean enough to say, as some Germans have recently said, that the Germans can admire Shakespeare because he was not really English in spirit. For *they* knew that the most cosmopolitan man that ever lived was a Jewish carpenter, every fibre of whose character was typically Jewish. And yet Chamberlain, the high priest of German megalomania, tells us that Jesus was an Aryan!

Germany is eternally right in thinking that men and nations have missions. By what divine revelations, however, does she know that to Germany is given from this time on, the chieftain-

ship in all human culture, if not the overlordship of the nations? He that is greatest among us shall *serve* the brethren. Shall Germany answer the question, Who is my neighbor? by saying, Germans, or Teutons? Man's mission is to reach self-realization by serving God through service to mankind—man-*kin*. Why could not Germany be content to keep up her noble service of teaching the people to teach themselves? Has she ever shown any capacity for making other nations and races wish to swallow whole the idiosyncrasies of her own national *Kultur*? Was she not working her untrammelled way into the markets of the world as well as developing internally in a most wonderful fashion? Has she ever been able to specify definitely wherein other nations were unfairly retarding her progress? Is the world to be held responsible for the historical fact that Germany woke up too late for world dominion, even admitting that such a thing is a legitimate national ambition? Shall the largely accidental and half-conscious land-snatching of England be developed into a self-conscious world empire for Germany—and in this enlightened day? Just at the time when England is learning to give self-government to her dependencies, shall Germany expect to apply the Prussian yardstick to all things governmental and cultural? Germany may deny this lust for empire and dominance, but she cannot but admit her lack of sympathy with other types of national culture, her contempt for “barbarous” Russia and “decadent” France and “effete and hypocritical” England. Her nationalism has become a mania; her God, the God of the German tribes; her morality, German *Kultur* and “efficiency.” If Germany can show that we are mistaken in these estimates, many of us will be very happy on account of the demonstration. But how can any disinterested person fail to see that Germany is not interested in the wide human sympathy of Lessing and Goethe and Herder and Kant?

2. *Ethical*.—Enough here to say that Germans like Leibnitz and Kant have taught us that each human being is a microcosm, reflecting the whole world from his own peculiar standpoint; that the moral law is a categorical imperative, allowing no side-stepping and permitting no nationalistic casuistry. Professor Dewey in blaming Kant's ethics is unfair to the Kant who wrote

the essay on universal peace, the Kant who sympathized with Rousseauan liberty, equality, and fraternity, the Kant who tells us never to treat human beings as things (even though they be Belgians), the Kant who put the golden rule of Jesus into philosophical language. What though his doctrine is twisted from its true meaning because of its use in the interests of arbitrary political absolutism instead of the absoluteness of the moral standard of the City of Souls! Morality, it is true, is not an ultimate end; that function is forever reserved for the Coming of the Kingdom of God; but it *is* a proximate end, as are all the great ideals of the true, the beautiful, and the good. Yea, all ultimate spiritual means are proximate spiritual ends, otherwise æsthetic, moral, and scientific and philosophical habits could not be formed, and the human race would expose its heritage to the deadly microbes of selfish subjectivity. Kant would not have denied that self-preservation is the *first* law of nature (not the last nor the greatest), the law of the natural man; but he would have scorned the miserable casuistry that would save some risk to the national skin at the expense of the national honor—especially when such a plea is put forward by admittedly the most efficient nation on earth about to attempt a “defensive aggressive advance” in the face of its opponents’ unreadiness.

3. *Mystical*.—It may be that the German overlords would scorn the very name of “mystic.” But Germany has ever been the land of the truest mysticism. Two of her leading theologians, if not the two most influential, namely, Schleiermacher and Ritschl, though they cannot be called technical mystics, and the latter thought that he scorned mysticism, have taught the world to build theology on the principle of Universal Love. Now Christian Love is always mystical. It insists on believing all things and hoping all things, it suffereth long and is kind, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly. Contrast this central doctrine of Christianity and of the most influential German theology with German “Hymns of Hate,” and the current German feeling toward England for doing her manifest duty and thus protecting her ultimate national integ-

rity. Individual Englishmen and Frenchmen may hate Germany, but German hatred of the Allies, especially England, seems to be active and effective in its *results*. Even if England *had* outwitted Germany in the game of diplomacy, why should Germany be so unsportsmanlike as to rave over "perfidious Albion"? Once again we see the truth of the contention that Germany's chief trouble is her lack of sportsmanship. Love is always generous, sportsmanlike, gentle, and manly.

4. *Visional*.—We have seen the two universal-minded poets teaching us the meaning of the Vocation of Man; two philosophers of the same nation have shown us the sacredness and universality of the Law of Righteousness as opposed to the pseudo-imperative of a merely self-preserving and narrow national "duty" interpreted by a bureaucracy; we have found two great German theologians teaching us of Love as the unifying principle of religion, and thus bringing us back to the central meaning of the revelation and cosmic activity of Jesus. And now, when we come to the final apocalyptic stage of the manly-religious Mystic Way, we are once more indebted to Germans. Johannes Weiss and Schweitzer would be the last to claim equality with the great men we have spoken of; but they have brought, through their vocation as New Testament critics, a new vision of values in the revelational philosophy of Jesus. I call this stage the Vision of Immediacy; and I believe that it transvaluates the meaning of the stages that precede it. The world needs a Vocation, an Ethics, a Love, an Apocalyptic Vision, each an attitude of progressive immediacy. Weiss and Schweitzer have shown incontestably that Christ emphasized the apocalyptic aspect of His Mission, and that the early church was true to His teaching. Jesus expected the end of the world and His own coming in largest cosmic fashion some time within the generation of men then on the earth. He did not profess to know the day or the hour; but from first to last He used but transfigured the message of His predecessor, John the Baptist—"Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." And this is *the* message in this day of catastrophe and cataclysm. We can hear as seldom before the groaning and travailing of

the whole creation. The cry, "Kill and conquer," drowns out the voice of the angel choir with its "Peace on earth to men of good-will." The men of good-will toward mankind are not in charge of the destinies of Germany. The German *Kultur*-bringers deceive themselves by thinking or pretending to think that they may pick and choose which human souls they may value and which despise. They call this attitude super-moral "patriotism." Not so. Inasmuch as ye have done harm to these my brethren, even these least, ye have done it unto Me, says the strong Son of God who came to bring peace *and* a sword. Men will and perhaps should fight until they learn to repent and love. Men will fight until peace is the product of the fight for perfection. Men will fight until the Hymns of Hate, uttered or unuttered, English or German, give place to the Law of Love written in the hearts of men and therefore on the statute books of the nations.

The dominant Liberal Protestantism of Germany has been foremost in putting the Kingdom of God as the prime object of Christ's endeavors, and therefore the conscious goal of Christians. German scholars have lately been showing the intense futurism of the work of Jesus. Yet it is the German bureaucracy that has dealt a staggering blow to that international law which represents the efforts of the nations towards humaneness and the righteousness of the Kingdom of God. The Messiah was due to come in Christ's day. The sufficient Cause was present in a Life, a Death, and a Resurrection; but the wicked wills of man have kept it back until now. God has "all the time that is," but how do *we* dare to retard the Course of Things? Let all the nations answer; but especially must the Cultured Nation give its account at the last day, if not sooner.

The Conscience of the World, acting as Grand Jury of Humanity, has brought in a true bill against Germany. The Trial Jury of Germany's own has judged her guilty. Not a German "*von Gott*," but the God of all men will pronounce sentence and put it into execution. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

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